

## (Sub)merging Metonymies: *The Moonstone*

Borislav Knežević  
Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb

This reading of Wilkie Collins's most famous novel, *The Moonstone*, tries to suggest some interpretations of the novel's most prominent metaphor, a Diamond called the Moonstone, and to investigate the models this novel generates for its understanding. Central importance is attached to the novel's discovery of the unconscious, which becomes the focal point for its critique of some cultural and literary clichés.

“Carbon, Betteredge, mere carbon, my good friend, after all”, says Godfrey Ablewhite when the Moonstone is first produced on Rachel's birthday. Godfrey seems to want to dispell the power that the Diamond holds the company in after seeing it, himself equally drawn to it. As Betteredge reports, fascination was general: “Lord bless us! it was a Diamond! As large, or nearly, as a plover's egg! The light that streamed from it was like the light of the harvest-moon. When you looked down into the stone, you locked into a yellow deep that drew your eyes into it so that they saw nothing else. It seemed unfathomable; this jewel, that you could hold between your finger and thumb, seemed unfathomable as the heavens themselves. We set it in the sun, and then shut the light out of the room, and it shone awfully out of the depths of its own brightness, with a moony gleam, in the dark. No wonder Miss Rachel was fascinated; no wonder her cousins screamed.”<sup>1</sup> So, the Moonstone is carbon and unfathomable light, nothing and all. It seems to glide from culture to culture, context to context, hand to hand, with a wonderful power of transforming not only itself, but also the contexts it finds itself in. Like meaning itself? Like value? Like desire? It is no wonder then not only that Rachel was fascinated, but also that the Moonstone should be seen as “the apotheosis of the means by which meaning, desire, value are created out of projection, displacement, and

1. Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 97. All subsequent quotations from *The Moonstone* are from this edition. The page number will be bracketed..

transference".<sup>2</sup> A dream-text for a poststructuralist, perhaps, with its merciless drift towards relativisation, *The Moonstone* is also a historical discourse and a discourse on history, almost meticulously ingenious in its symbolical rendering of the issues that rend it. All that the Diamond means or does follows from the appropriation of it or projection onto it. Even when it shines "out of the depths of its own brightness", the Moonstone borrows its light, as the moon borrows its light from the sun. And these operations of projection and appropriation the novel codes in specific cultural and historical terms. The Moonstone itself performs a merciless historicising: it shows that even the body is a cultural construct by denaturalising Rachel's hysteria wrought in the symbolic adventures of her fascination with the Diamond, or with the loss of what it symbolically is. By refracting Rachel's fascination through a field of cultural controversy delineated by its trajectory, the Moonstone puts a specific historical construction on her desire.

To read the light of *The Moonstone* in the light of desire and history has indeed become the imperative of criticism in the past two decades. The most influential psychoanalytic critic of the novel, Albert G. Hutter, was interested in reading this text primarily as an analogy of the dreaming process and of its pattern of psychic conflict and resolution. According to his own words, he sees "latent structure, not latent content, /as/ the critical interpretive issue".<sup>3</sup> In this way, his concern was in the main to establish formal or structural parallels between detective fiction and the dreaming process, so that *The Moonstone* served him more as a pretext than a text. Although touching on some important historical issues raised by this novel, his reading fails to address the question of desire as a historical construct in a historical context. Another important contemporary reader of *The Moonstone*, A. D. Miller, seems to follow a different path. He wants to historicise; his analysis places great emphasis on the ideology of the novel, which he sees as one meant to disguise the ruling power relations. He accuses the novel of monologism, and this is in some measure a result of his focusing almost entirely on the story of detection, or on the novel as a detective story, not heeding the labour of symbolism in this novel. Thus, D. A. Miller simply reduces the novel's plurality. Since a critic does not only become anxious but also often profits from influence, I must say that by far the finest reading of this novel is that by Jenny Bourne-Taylor in a book called *In the Secret Theatre of Home*. She reads this novel as "Collins's most ambitious exploration of social and psychic identity, as a study in ambiguity itself".<sup>4</sup> It is by virtue of her historicising the real conflicts and their symbolic resolutions in this novel that some of our findings will be similar. However, while she insists on an ambiguity, commented upon already by Dickens – that the novel is "wild yet domestic" – I shall insist more on a rift created by such an ambiguity, or on the drift of this rift, which is the subversion of

2. This quote comes from Jenny Bourne-Taylor's book on Wilkie Collins, *In the Secret Theatre of Home*, Routledge, London, 1988, p. 195. The chapter dealing with this novel is called "Lost Parcel of Hidden Soul? Detecting the Unconscious in the Moonstone".

3. Albert D. Hutter, "Dreams, Transformations and Literature: The Implications of Detective Fiction", *Victorian studies*, 19 (2) 1975, p. 207. Hutter justifiably observes that the "resolution of the mystery is never so important as the process itself of connecting and disconnecting, building a more complete account from an incomplete vision or fragment" (p. 208). But his reading of *The Moonstone* winds up with the most general comment on the reader's self-questioning through reading, disregarding what the novel is specifically about.

4. Bourne-Taylor, p. 176.

the ideology of domesticity that the novel seemingly reinforces. While for her the novel becomes “a victim of its own cognitive relativism”<sup>5</sup> and almost a defence of hermeneutical high skepticism, I shall lay stress on the critical impulse of *The Moonstone*. Or, to invert Dickens’s words, I shall try to show that the novel is domestic yet wild. Not disputing the fact that some texts may wind up in an ideological tie, my reading will deal with a tie-break in this novel.

### A Passage from India

“The romance of the Indian Diamond” (324) is just one of the several stories in the novel, and one which through a complex symbolic configuration unites or disunites them all. Alongside with the story of detection filled with suspense and adventure, there is the marital story of Franklin Blake and Rachell Verinder, the story of Franklin’s discovery of his own self, the story of Rosanna Spearman’s love and death, the story of Ezra Jennings – a whole string of stories attached to the Diamond and refracted through its enormous power of generating symbols. The gain, loss and detection of the Diamond provides the motive for the juxtaposition and interweaving of all these stories, which leads to the explanation of the theft through a series of accidentally related incidents. Incidentally, there seems to be no single agent of detection – neither Sergeant Cuff, nor Franklin Blake or Ezra Jennings, can or do solve the mystery by themselves. The solution is rather a joint effort, since it requires the collaboration of several people to decipher the riddle. Yet this collaboration is not always intentional, and coincidences contribute to a large extent both to the theft and the solution. After the Moonstone is found missing, what we in retrospect know to be misleading is the very fact that its displacement is not really a theft, or not only a theft. Blake’s taking the Diamond while under the influence of laudanum is an accident, though Godfrey’s taking the Diamond from him is obviously a theft. So it turns out that Blake unconsciously collaborated with Godfrey. In like fashion, the manner in which Blake collects the missing information is conspicuously performed as accidental, unintended collaboration: Rosanna Spearman incriminates Blake meaning to screen him, and Ezra Jennings turns up to clear Blake from the guilt once it seemed that the secret was safely locked away in Dr Candy’s amnesia. The fact that there is no single successful agency of detection and that the collaboration in solving the mystery was partly unintentional, led D. A. Miller to conclude that there is a providential element at work in this novel. He claims that the detective function is displaced onto the community, but in such a way that “what integrates and consolidates the efforts of characters is a master plan that no one governs or even anticipates. The community serves such a master plan but is not its master”.<sup>6</sup>

5. Ibid. p. 201. Jenny Bourne-Taylor’s main concern is to analyse *The Moonstone*’s model of the unconscious in the light of contemporary theories of the unconscious referred to by Ezra Jennings. Since she finds this model ambiguous, her whole reading will insist much more on the element of ambiguity than mine. For me, the novel’s idea of the unconscious will be more a vehicle for its critical discursivity than the establishment of an ambiguity.

Miller reads this master plan as the text's suggestion that "the nature of things is so arranged that Godfrey's crime inevitably designates and punishes itself". He criticises the novel for its adherence to this "principle of quasi-automatic self-regulation", which reinforces the dominant social ideology: "The equivocal role of the 'providential' – immanent in the social world yet distinct from its intentionalities – is thus part of a strategy whose ideological implications should be plain. The exercise of policing power inheres in the logic of the world, but only as a discreet 'accident' of normative social practices and models of conduct".<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, this interpretation of the "providential" function in this novel is the ground on which Miller builds his monologism thesis: all different narrative voices and partial detective agents only work to reinstate the rule of only one logic, that of an automatic self-regulation of things.

A historical footnote, however, may let us see this "providential" function in a somewhat different light. What Miller describes as the ideology that crime eventually punishes itself can be recognised as the principle of poetic justice or happy-end, one that was largely observed by mid-Victorian novelists. Even the canonically more problematic novels seldom resisted the call of poetic justice or some form of happy-ending – *Wuthering Heights*, *Henry Esmond*, *Great Expectations* or *Felix Holt*, to name but a few. The canonical novel of the mid-19th century is of course the middle-class novel, discoursing primarily with and to the middle-classes. It was a very specific form of cultural production which was not only externally related to the business aspects of it. Perhaps it was for the very reason of writing becoming a business, something one did for a living, that this bond between middle-class writers and readers seemed to be also one of ideology. Not wishing to oversimplify this very complex issue, let it suffice to say that the mid-Victorian novel tended to obey the call of poetic justice, in a sincere or sometimes feigned gesture of reassuring the audience that in the end things take care of themselves. The context of social conflicts, ever louder questioning of patriarchy, and relatively fast-chopped cultural and civilisational changes did certainly create a need for reassurance. Narratives of crime and punishment, virtue and reward often seemed to provide it, or else to question the very function of such providing.

*The Moonstone* is far from merely complying with any such simple literary/social convention as the happy-end. The basis on which Miller builds his argument – that the community works for the best without its members knowing it – can be shown to count on elements leading to a very different conclusion. Could not the fact that the novel suggests no single successful detective or policing agency be read as a failure of the community effectively to police some domains of life? Is the happy or conventional ending to be trusted? Are novels indeed to be taken at their most literal word? Once we recognise that automatic self-regulation in the community can at least tentatively be attributed to a socioliterary convention not entertained seriously, it is difficult to sustain the charge of monologism.

6. D. A. Miller's analysis of *The Moonstone* is in book called *The Novel and the Police*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988. The quotation is on page 42. The chapter on *The Moonstone* is called "From roman policier to roman-police: Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*". The chapter title faithfully represents Miller's main argument.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

What Sergeant Cuff describes at one point as his policing policy, I shall read as a policy of the whole novel as well: "In all my experience along the dirtiest ways of this dirty little world I have never met with any such thing as a trifle yet" (126). As one who, to use D. A. Miller's pun, relies on his super-vision for his task of supervision, Cuff not only qualifies the world which is refracted in the novel, but also insinuates that for us readers nothing in this novel should be regarded as insignificant. The detective form of this story clearly reinforces this hint, for it asks of readers to undertake the same operation of detection that Sergeant Cuff and the subsequent lay detectives engage in. Not that this is a strategy characteristic only of the detective story; any other text can be read in a similar fashion, but here this is also a reminder, an additional signal to the reader that no trifle is merely a trifle. Trifles not only serve as clues in the process of detection: they also draw attention away from the process of detection to *triflitude* itself, i.e. to the whole yet unstructured context of detection, to all the trifles that wait to be put into interrelationships. The trifle shows us that whodunnit is not all that counts, but also everything else that it seems to make irrelevant.

I have already said that *The Moonstone* is not just a story of detection, and that the stories in it are many. Unlike D. A. Miller, who implicitly chooses to read *The Moonstone* as the story of a complicitous community, I would like to read it as a complex symbolic narrative on a dividing community (or divided communities) and dissociating subjects. Indeed, *The Moonstone* looks like a discourse on the interrelationship between a colonial empire, a family and a psyche. The Diamond builds links between an English family and English imperialism, cutting out at the same time a "medical and metaphysical theory" (438) of the human mind. The Indian story of the Diamond frames the English story of the Diamond, one that is also the Verinder family story, or rather, the story of the Verinder family becoming the Blake family. The Blake family story is in turn the manifold story of Blake's becoming Father, his learning about his divided self, and Rachel's becoming Mother and the curing of her "hysteria". Formally a story of detection, *The Moonstone* is thematically a family story, as Blake, the narrative editor, himself says: "There can be no doubt that this strange family story of ours ought to be told". The motive for Blake's commissioning different people to contribute their narratives on the riddle of the Moonstone is to clear "the memories of innocent people" (39) – and though one might first think of Rosanna Spearman in this respect, it will become evident that Blake is clearing himself and Rachel, the persons most often said to be touched by "scandal". It turns out that Sergeant Cuff, the detective fetched by Blake from London, is a specialist in a "domestic practice": "I have been largely employed in cases of family scandal, acting in the capacity of confidential man" (205). He boasts to "have put the muzzle on worse family difficulties than this in /his/ time" (171).

Interestingly enough, almost all the narrators are either members of the family, or professional people employed to provide services to the family. Betteredge, whose narration occupies the largest portion of space, is the steward in the Verinder house. In a way, he is a member of the "family circle", as Cuff's words spoken in his presence clearly imply: "I have kept the secret within the family circle", (256). Betteredge himself often brags about his "place in the family" (86). Obviously, Collins aims here at the familiar 19th century equation of the household and the family circle, including servants as well as masters. Then there is Miss Clack, a relative and a religious hypocrite, Mr.

Bruff, the family lawyer, Cuff, a domestic detective, Ezra Jennings, a medical man, and of course Blake, the one to take over the Verinder family. The only other important narrator, the traveller Murthwaite, who finishes off the Epilogue, acquires significance precisely because he is *not* one of the family, or even not one of the whole cultural context signified by the Verinder family – that of English society.

Steward, policeman, lawyer, doctor and even the religious fanatic – all meant to serve and protect the family. Their function is that of supervision and control: of household economy, contacts with the outside world, transgressive behaviour and disease, some of them performing several functions. Disruption and danger come with the Diamond: “When I came here from London with that horrible Diamond... I don’t believe there was a happier household in England than this. Look at the household now! Scattered, disunited – the very air of the place poisoned with mystery and suspicion!” (169), says Blake. The idyllic atmosphere of the Verinder household is dispelled by the Diamond’s entering it: what results is not only theft, mystery and suspicion, but also suicide and murder, all leading to the destruction of the initial idyllic pretence. The social policy projected in the idea of a “happy household” is put to a serious test.

The trajectory of the Moonstone is a circular one: the jewel, originally set in the forehead of a statue of the Hindoo Moongod and said to bring curse on any one presuming to take it, had been plundered first by a Mogul officer, and then by an English soldier named Herncastle, who brings it to England, and presents it by his will to his niece Rachel in an act of revenge displacing the curse on her because her mother excommunicated him from the family on account of his Indian reputation; the Diamond is then stolen by Godfrey Ablewhite, whom Brahmin priests finally track down and kill, after which the Moonstone appears in its original place, the temple in the Indian city of Somnauth. The full circle of the Diamond frames the English family story, which raises the question of the relative importance of the two. The Rachel/Blake story can be interpreted as just an episode of the Moonstone story, as the Prologue/Epilogue frame shows. On the other hand, the story of the Diamond is mostly told from the point of view of the English family, and the Prologue/Epilogue frame seems to draw only a thin line around the voluminous English family story. The Moonstone’s line of flight delineates the two opposed cultural horizons of the narrative, but its original Indian setting gets actually very little attention. On the other hand, though the story’s main interest is the English family, the novel bears the name of the Diamond, which foregrounds its importance at the expense of the English interest.

The Moonstone’s trajectory thus formulates a contrast between the two cultures. On one pole of this opposition is English imperialism with its home ideologies of progress and social order. The xenophobic Betteredge points to such ideologies as social strongholds endangered by the “invasion” of the Diamond: “Here was our quiet English house suddenly invaded by a devilish Indian Diamond – bringing with it a conspiracy of living rogues, set loose on us by the vengeance of a dead man. Who ever heard the like of it – in the nineteenth century, mind; in an age of progress, and in a country that rejoices in the blessings of the British constitution?” (67) Of course, the word “invaded” here is textual irony at the expense of the imperialism that brought the Diamond to England in the first place. But it is also an expression of Betteredge’s xenophobic fear of the transgressive power of the Diamond – of its bringing along intimations of the savage, different, unknown. The very sacral function of the Moonstone identifies the Indian

world – the other pole of the cultural opposition constructed by the text – as one of mythology and tradition. It is also a world marked by a different notion of time; not time as progress, but time as a cycle. This concept of time is foregrounded in Murthwaite's next to last words in the concluding paragraph of the novel, when the Diamond is restored to its original place: "So the years pass and repeat each other, so the same events revolve in the cycles of time." (126) It should be stressed, though, that the novel does not raise the question about linear and cyclical time in a disjunctive form. Rather, it traces the effects of their contact – as contact between different cultural constructs of historical time. The novel indicates that there is a twofold invasion, a twofold nomadic exchange between the two cultures, but it focuses on the effects of such invasions primarily in the English social field – which reflects its English middle-class perspective, one that is at the same time deeply questioned by this invasion of otherness.

So, the Moonstone enters the Verinder household as a mark of Indian otherness. But upon entering it, it becomes a repository of meanings attached to it through the adventures of its presence/absence in the household. It functions as a multi-faced reflector of the Verinder world, or, as Jenny Bourne-Taylor says, its meaning is "continually merging with the objects and the people that surround it".<sup>8</sup> In this way, the Moonstone performs a twofold operation of difference: it refracts a division between English and Indian cultures, as well as divisions among the members of the household, i.e. the social and sexual hierarchies within it. As I have said, the Indian element is marginalised in the narrative, but in such a way that it frames the English story. The suggestion is obvious: the savage and mythological India is rendered as something encircling or even underlying the civilised and progress-minded English (or European) culture. It is true that for the Indians detecting the Diamond is a restoration of an old, eternal order, a recovery, and that for the members of the Verinder household the process of detection turns out to be learning about the new, a discovery. But it is the discovery of a savage, repressed, unconscious domain, only seemingly conquered and civilised. And by this and the narrative framing we are led to believe that the Indian "story" is the context of the English story, if not even its subtext. However, India does not represent here so much a specific culture as the idea of a colony, an enclave refusing to lose its otherness, or as an inexhaustible image of a primitive, different, non-civilisable and non-Western world. It is very interesting that Collins seemed to try to distinguish between two kinds of "Western" colonial policies, or policies on everything that is culturally other. The Prologue is reported by an English soldier and speaks of another soldier, Herculastle, who stole the Diamond – this is the policy of violence, conquest and irreverent destruction of the other. Not unimportantly, the incident takes place during the Battle of Seringapatam, which was decisive for the firm establishment of British rule in India. But the Epilogue fifty years later (1850) is given to Murthwaite, a celebrated traveller, who penetrates into the regions "left still unexplored", and who is also, in his own words, "a semi-savage person" (523), dressing, looking, eating and speaking Indian. Travelling not for plunder, but for curiosity, he stands for an anthropological attitude to (Indian) otherness, bent on learning about difference and not the destruction of it. This shift from soldier to anthropologist constitutes one of the main ideological drifts of the

8. Bourne-Taylor, p. 195.

novel: to learn about being different or savage, and about one's own situation in difference.

### A Hystereotype Exposed

The Victorian novelist most often found no other way to treat certain "unmentionable" matters than through elaborate allegories and allusions. Such tongue-in-cheek tongue-in-check is easily detectable in *The Moonstone* as well. The most portentous episode in this respect is the loss of the Moonstone, which is also, as Albert D. Hutter put it, the loss of Rachel's "symbolic virginity". In support to this interpretation, Hutter focuses on Rosanna Spearman's reaction on discovering that the smeared nightshirt belonged to Franklin Blake: "I shall not tell you what was the first suspicion that crossed my mind, when I had made the discovery." (366). Yet, Collins did not count only on the self-explanatory connotation of the smeared nightshirt: the whole episode is teeming with allusions to Rachel's symbolical seduction on the night of the theft. That evening at the dinner table Blake starts a discussion of "the lengths to which a married woman might let her admiration go for a man who was not her husband" (104), and already this signals a question about social construction of feminine sexuality. And during the day Rachel and Blake spent a lot of time painting her *boudoir* door – the door to the most private womanly chamber. This door will later print a stain on Blake's nightshirt, and Rosanna's comment is again worth relating for the sexual transparency of its portal symbolism: "I saw the stain of the paint from Miss Rachel's door." (365). According to her uncle Herculane's will, Rachel receives the Moonstone on her 18th birthday – another mark of transition and initiation. Of course, the Indian Diamond draws Rachel into a play of cultural signification where the contact with it means contamination with otherness. Appropriately enough, she puts the Diamond into a drawer of an Indian cabinet "for the purpose of permitting two beautiful native productions to admire each other" (112), thus recognising the powerful assertion of difference in the Diamond and the cabinet. The fact that she already has an Indian cabinet tells us that she is already soaked in otherness. Note also how the text suggests sexual imagery through a multiple enclosing of the Moonstone in closed, hidden, private places: the Diamond is *in* the drawer *in* the cabinet *in* the boudoir. Finally, let us not forget that Blake is not only the one who paints Rachel's door but also the one to bring the Diamond into the house executing Herculane's will, as well as the one whom she seems willing to marry.

Through its association with Blake, through its hardness, through its function of building Rachel's desire through a logic of presence/absence or possession/loss, the Moonstone obviously takes on phallic significances. But it is also a feminine symbol. A. D. Hutter perceived that there is a connection between moon symbolism and femininity, and he suggested that the Diamond's having a "defect, in the shape of a flaw, in the very heart of /it/" (71) points to "some of the sexual prejudices so strongly attached to women

9. Hutter, p. 201.



in the nineteenth century".<sup>10</sup> But Hutter failed to appreciate the emphasis there is in the novel on the issue of sexual politics, and his analysis stops at the above observation. One might say that there are two kinds of sexual prejudice foregrounded by the novel's busiest symbol, as the moon metaphor may be identified to have a double connotation. On the one hand, the menstrual association evokes the familiar 19th century prejudice that woman is a creature absolutely determined by biology, a victim of her own cyclical temperament. In other words, an inferior creature with an unreliable physiology and mentality – often denominated as a hysteric. Like India, woman was constructed as a field of potentially disruptive difference. The satellitic association of woman with the moon highlights an ideology of familial relationship, designating the space for such and inferior being: the centre of the familial microcosmos is the patriarch, and the woman is there to unswervingly follow. This kind of social constraint of femininity led J. S. Mill to conclude aptly that "the family is a school of despotism"<sup>11</sup>, in his essay on the social and familial subjection of women published a year after *The Moonstone*. It is worth noting that in this novel there is a "domestic question" (86) to settle: to find a patriarch for the Verinder household – this is another process of detection taking place in the story. For in the structure of the Verinder household something is lacking: there is no man in the house. Romancing the Moonstone thus turns out to be a version of the family romance.

The male-dominated general opinion and dominant cultural practices combined to impose the ideology of woman as a natural hysteric; whereas the desirable womanly role was desexed and designed as domestic angel, inferior and satellitic. Any show of self-determination was readily interpreted as hysteria. In her essay "Victorian Woman and Insanity", Elaine Showalter quotes from the Victorian doctor F. C. Skey, who claimed in his lectures on hysteria that the hysteric is "a female member of a family exhibiting more than usual force and decision of character, of strong resolution, fearless of danger, bold rider, having plenty of what is termed *nerve*".<sup>12</sup> In *The Moonstone* Rachel is often seen as such hystereotype by several narrators. Thus Betteredge insists that she has but one *defect*:

To put it seriously, my dear pretty Miss Rachel, possessing a host of graces and attractions, had one defect, which strict impartiality compels me to acknowledge. She was unlike most other girls of her age, in this – that she had ideas of her own, and was stiff-necked enough to set the fashions themselves at defiance, if the fashions didn't suit her views. In trifles, this independence of hers was all well enough; but in matters of importance it carried her (as my lady thought, and as I thought) too far. She judged for herself, as few woman of twice her age judge in general; never asked your advice; never told you beforehand what she was going to do; never came with secrets and confidences to anybody, from her mother downwards. (87)

The servile and dedicated Betteredge, who sees himself as the keeper of a family order, and who closes up the family story triumphantly producing the news of marriage and Rachel's pregnancy, is also a sexist ideologue, who often speaks of "the inbred frailty and perversity of the other sex" (345). Due to his social position he functions as a popular mouthpiece for the ideology of male superiority: "It is a maxim of mine that men (being

10. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

11. J. S. Mill, *On Liberty The Subjection of Woman*, Tauchnitz, Leipzig, 1917, p. 229.

12. Quoted in Elaine Showalter, "Victorian Women and Insanity", *Victorian Studies* 23 (2) 1980, p.

superior creatures) are bound to improve women” (184). Betteredge takes pride in being “constitutionally superior to reason” (208), meaning the suspicious reason of Sergeant Cuff who appears to have little observance of class in accusing Rachel of the theft. Betteredge’s name could be read as a tongue-in-cheek comment on this confidence of his in the rightness of the social institutions and practices he helps to maintain.<sup>13</sup> Another moralist, but of a different kind, is Miss Clack, the evangelical fanatic, who in her narrative insists on describing Rachel as hysterical. When Rachel in ignorance offers to clear Godfrey by writing to the newspapers or by crying her declaration of his innocence in the streets, Clack comments: “We will not say this was the language of remorse – we will say this was the language of hysterics.” (253). Rachel’s silence about the night of the theft helped to cast suspicion not only on herself, but on several other people, including Godfrey; what Clack is suggesting here is that Rachel’s offer is not motivated by a guilty conscience, but rather that it reveals some sexual or hysterical aetiology.

Miss Clack should not be seen only as a comic caricature of religious fervour, who does her missionary work “irrespective of every human consideration which moves the world” (273), who is a member of quaint organisations named Mother’s-Small-Clothes-Conversion Society and British-Ladies’-Servants’-Sunday-Sweetheart Supervision Society, and who spreads didactic literature such as “The Serpent at Home”, with chapters for female perusal entitled: “Satan in the Hair-Brush”, “Satan behind the Looking Glass”, “Satan under the Tea-Table”, “Satan out of the Window”. Already these ridiculous titles show that Clack is more than just a hyperbole of religious zeal; she is also a metaphorical interpretation of it. She sees her mission as battling the exercise of “carnal reason”, or as repressing and controlling the (primarily female) body – just think of the ridiculous supervision Society or the dangers of the flesh lurking everywhere. But Clack cannot control her own desire – her writing reveals a narrative of repressed longing for Godfrey, the “Christian hero” of her story. Her words betray her: “He beamed on us with his beautiful smile; he held out a hand to my aunt and a hand to me. I was too deeply affected by his noble conduct to speak. I closed my eyes. I put his hand, in a kind of spiritual self-forgetfulness, to my lips ... Oh, the ecstasy, the pure, unearthly ecstasy of that moment!” (255); or: “He pressed my hands alternately to his lips. Overwhelmed by the exquisite triumph of having got him back among us, I let him do what he liked with my hands. I closed my eyes. I felt my head, in an ecstasy of spiritual self-forgetfulness, sinking on his shoulder. In a moment more I should certainly have swooned away in his arms...” (230).

Miss Clack’s clacking constructs a curious parallel between her and Rachel. Of course, we learn that she distrusts Rachel because she is sexually jealous: “I confess it grieved me to see /Godfrey/ take Rachel’s hand in both his hands, and lay it softly on the left side of his waistcoat” (247). She typically finds Rachel lacking the expected female constraint. To her Rachel’s voice is loud, bold and wanting in “every female

13. Betteredge’s scripture, the text in which he cryptically finds guidance any time he is confused, is *Robinson Crusoe*. This is indeed a telling way of characterising the domesticity of the xenophobic Betteredge’s ideology. For *Robinson Crusoe* may be understood as a manual of civilising the savage, or of remaining civilised when confronted with the savage. It is also a book about an autonomous self that transforms the world out of its own depths. *The Moonstone* tries to show that no such autonomy of the self exists: everything is interrelated and in the self’s depths there is always the other.

charm". Throughout her narrative Clack hints that Rachel is not culturally acceptable to Godfrey, more like a man in her self-determination. Clack's linguistic production is shaped by a logic of suppressed desire and sexual jealousy. Her "Sunday-School style" advertises her sexual frustration. For her, language is meant to control carnality, but it explodes with traces of unvanquished desire. In fact, as long as she can talk or write to people or distribute the pamphlets her desire gets going – her entire action turning into the opposite of what it declaratively is. It is mainly in language that her desire can find expression. But it is a language of self-deception, whereas with Rachel it will be a language of self-analysis. Interesting in this respect are Rachel's words delivered in a conversation with Godfrey when she feels compelled to break her silence and make a confession about her desire for Blake: "Is there a form of hysterics that bursts into words instead of tears?" (280). Her bursting into words may conventionally be recognised as just another manifestation of her hysteric nerve, but it is actually an act of self-analysis such as Clack is incapable of. Rachel owns up to her desire for Blake, whose name is not mentioned on the occasion: "Suppose you were in love with some other woman?... Suppose you discovered that woman to be utterly unworthy of you?... And suppose, in spite of all that – you couldn't tear her from your heart?... Suppose the love this wretch had inspired in you – Oh, how can I find words to say it in! How can I make a *man* understand that a feeling which horrifies me at myself can be a feeling that fascinates me at the same time? It's the breath of my life, Godfrey, and it's the poison that kills me – both in one!" (280). Passion somewhat reminiscent of Cathy Earnshaw.

The narrative turns involving the loss of the Moonstone put Rachel into a strange position: she is dissociated from her body and has to repress her desire, and she is also initially dissociated from language, and does not speak of her repressed desire until this moment. Let us not forget that the loss of the Moonstone is metaphorically suggestive of Rachel's loss of virginity. At this metaphorical level Rachel's "hysterical" reaction can be attributed to what she understands as Blake's disowning his actions that night – she is ignorant of the fact that *he* was consciously ignorant of what he was doing. Her "hysterical" words show that she is torn between two opposing impulses: horror and fascination both with Blake and what she feels for him.

"Hysterical symptoms arise as a compromise between two opposite affective and instinctual impulses, of which one is attempting to bring to expression a component instinct or a constituent of the sexual constitution, and the other is attempting to suppress it".<sup>14</sup> These words were written by Freud and they seem to describe the same aetiology of hysteria that is implied in Rachel's self-analysis. The point here is not so much that as theories of the psyche Freud's psychoanalysis and this novel's discourse on hysteria converge, although the points of their convergence are many and evident. The point is rather that both Freudian psychoanalysis and *The Moonstone* refract the dominant 19th century attitude to sexuality: one that is at the same time marked by fascination and horror, desire and repression. It could even be said that hysteria epitomises this attitude perfectly, representing censorship not only of desire but also of the desire of an entire sex. But whereas Freud's discourse often reproduced the prevalent patriarchal sexism – a fact causing embarrassment to some of his followers and perhaps leading (perhaps

14. Sigmund Freud, "Hysterical Phantasies and Their Relation to Bisexuality", in *On Psychopathology*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1987, p. 92.

“unconsciously”) the quizzical and laconic Lacan to designate hysteria as the original sin of psychoanalysis – *The Moonstone* is interesting for its social and cultural *contextualisation* of hysteria. For what *The Moonstone* is doing is exposing gender and hysteria as social constructs, as stereotype and ideology.

Betteredge and Clack mark two discursive forms of that ideology – practical and doctrinal, both caricatured by the text precisely in order to denaturalise the two modes of 19th century bourgeois sexism. As an ideologue of dangerous feminine carnality, Clack speaks from within, readily acknowledging her own “hysterical” nature. When once spying on Rachel and Godfrey, Clack’s jealousy is kindled up by seeing Godfrey’s arms round Rachel, and she writes of her ability to control her impulses: “I attribute my being still able to hold the curtain in the right position for looking and listening entirely to suppressed hysterics. In suppressed hysterics, it is admitted even by the doctors, that one must hold something.” (280). Along with the lovely suggestion of Clack’s voyeurism as a substitute outlet for her repressed desire (“to hold the curtain in the right position for looking and listening” because in suppressed hysterics “one must hold something”), striking here is also Clack’s use of the term “hysterics”, or rather “suppressed hysterics”, implying that she does not regard “hysterics” as a symptom, but rather as a cause, a primary condition. This tells us that she thinks of “hysterics” as a natural attribute of woman, or, to conflate it with her evangelical rhetoric, as the inherent “fallen”, “carnal” nature. However, Rachel’s use of the term “hysterics” is different, subtly yet ingeniously ironic: her “hysterical” outburst does not take the conventional form (“tears” of a conventional heroine), but a self-conscious form (“words” of her self-analysis). Rachel’s account of her own case of “hysterics” reveals a different aetiology than that of Clack: she insists on an interaction between repression and desire, where Clack sees only the expression of a corrupt nature. If Clack sees hysteria as nature, Rachel sees it as culture.

But if Rachel’s subtle irony subverts the bourgeois sexism, Betteredge seems to be there to reassert its domination. We learn to disbelieve the categorial apparatus of Clack’s clacking, as we are continually invited to read her self-deception as a caricature of a sexual ideology, but Betteredge is a different case. Unlike the jealous and frustrated fanatic Clack, Betteredge represents a patronising form of sexism that pretends to be friendly and good-natured, one that is embedded in the happy household policy. As the steward who supervises the functioning of a household he looks for his authority in tradition and convention, and he does not like to see “the fashions themselves set at defiance”. He strives for a happy coexistence of the household in both class and sex terms, and his special wish is to see Rachel and Blake unite in wedlock. His view on marriage is “economy – with a dash of love” (43), a recognisable obsession of Victorian novels with a mixture of convenience and romance. In this respect, Betteredge functions as a representative of a middle-class public desirous of pacification by a sexual/economic idyll respectful of the established hierarchies. Indeed, he is closely associated with the establishment of the sexual/economic conventionality of the story. Not only is he the narrator of the largest portion of the text, but Collins slyly puts him into a position of (false) authority: Betteredge brags about his opening and “shutting up” the story. He is the one who provides anticipation of Blake’s and Rachel’s marriage in the beginning, and rejoices over it – and over the news of Rachel’s pregnancy – in the end of the family story. He introduces the two to the reader, but also distances them through his false authority. It is as if in order to accomplish their expected roles of Father and Mother in

a bourgeois family, Rachel and Blake have to be looked at from a long way off. Whatever was controversial about them is now smoothed over through Betteredge's presentation of the happy-end. Or seems to be smoothed over. But Betteredge is far from asserting his authority over the text unchallenged – being just one of many narrators, and one whose views often run counter to what *The Moonstone* communicates through the richness of its symbolic working. Finally, the novel ironises Betteredge precisely because he is not the one to open and close up the story. On the one hand, he is simply commissioned to do that, relieving Blake of a too obvious advertisement of himself. On the other hand, the Indian Prologue/Epilogue frame helps to betray Betteredge – and his conventional wisdom – as a presumption of authority.

### Return of the Stain

*The Moonstone* constructs a metonymic connection between India and femininity: both are represented as only half-conquered domains of otherness, and become metonymically interchangeable. But there are several other things attached to this metonymic string: the realms of the unconscious and the socially “low”. Crucially helping towards the solution of the missing Diamond riddle are two “low” characters: Rosanna Spearman and Ezra Jennings. Although they both want to help Blake, and indeed they both do, their function in the novel is to mar the story's work towards Rachel's and Blake's domestic bliss. Rosanna evokes a disturbing world of class domination, and Ezra opens the door to the strange world of the unconscious. They introduce the dark side of bourgeois self-imaging. Their deaths are the price ironically paid for the happy end demanded by class expectation. They have to be removed to mark their radical incompatibility with the story's conventional movement towards the pacification of all difference.

Rosanna is doubly marginalised: not only as a servant but also as a woman. Like Rachel, she is suggested to have a suspicious constitution: other servants often talk about her “fainting fits”. She is even physically marked – her shoulder is deformed. She is more sexually liberated than Rachel – her confession that she put on Blake's stained nightshirt tells us that she is what Rachel is reluctantly trying to repress. She finds her death in the Shivering Sand, a quicksand beach set quivering and trembling at the turn of the tide. The cyclical/lunar connection renders this place another metaphor of femininity in this novel: the fact that everybody, with the exception of Rosanna, gives this place a wide berth mirrors the Victorian fear and repression of female sexuality. By analogy, Rosanna's attraction to the place makes her into a force of affirmation of the female body. On the other hand, it is also true that she might remind one of the middle-class Victorian representation of the lower-class woman as less civilised or less sexually restrained. Yet Collins is careful not to use Rosanna as a corroboration of correctness of the cultural stereotype – the novel does not make her sexual awareness an element of upholding the prevalent ideologies and practices, but rather makes her desire become a vehicle of transgressive criticism. “What is primarily transgressive about Rosanna is that as an ugly working-class woman she *has* a subjectivity and a sexuality that she has

the audacity to express”,<sup>15</sup> says Jenny Bourne-Taylor. Yet the text suggests that this subjectivity and sexuality cannot be realised within the existing social and cultural contexts, so that Rosanna’s desire becomes a mark of the text’s desire for a redefinition of social and sexual orders.

“Something that felt like the happy life I had never led yet leaped in me the instant I set eyes on you” (362), writes Rosanna in her posthumous letter to Blake. The problem for her arises as the “reality principle” sets in in the shape of rigid class barriers that she cannot transcend – Blake takes no notice of her. Unable to suppress her hopeless desire for Blake she seeks refuge in the Shivering Sand – and it is this manoeuvre in the plot that highlights the impasse of her sexual and social positions, and that may also be regarded as her renunciation of these positions. Symptomatically enough, her only friend and another marked and “mad” woman, Limping Lucy, blames the class hierarchy for Rosanna’s fate, craving for its breakdown: “Ha, Mr. Betteredge, the day is not far off when the poor will rise against the rich. I pray Heaven they may begin with *him*”<sup>16</sup> (277), meaning Blake. Let us recall that Collins set the action in 1848, and that the loss of the Diamond caused the household to be “disunited”. The social turmoil of 1848 is the haunting *absence* in this novel, repressed yet signified. The manner in which Blake takes no notice of Rosanna as a servant (and) woman resembles the manner in which the Verinder/Blake family story takes no notice of its historical context. But the novel builds its discursive space precisely in the difference between Blake’s position and the laborious textual operations of symbolically returning what Blake has repressed. Even his name – *Franklin Blake* – is a curious comment on his authority: there is little rebellious or prophetic about him as the names of the two great 18th century personages might suggest.

Yet, Blake is a strange character. He brings some nonconformism into the Verinder household, but only slightly. He makes Betteredge uneasy by his foreign tastes, and by not seeming to care about the “ancient safeguards” of English society, threatened by the “spread of Democracy” (104). Collins jocularly makes him an advocate of “Subjective-Objective” philosophy, according to which “one interpretation is just as likely to be right as the other” (76). Blake’s skepticism importantly breaks out in the discussion on Rachel’s birthday when he compares medicine and groping in the dark, which provokes Dr Candy to make him take opium without knowing it. However, Blake’s skepticism and relativism do not really seem to seriously affect his sexual and social politics, or to make him transgressive in the sense that Rosanna is. Collins even makes him in some ways similar to the hypocritical Godfrey: like him Blake kept and jilted an “unmentionable” woman before courting Rachel. Blake’s selfishness is importantly foregrounded when he is quick to suspect Rosanna of the theft, just because she comes from a lower class and was once a thief. But most importantly, Blake is presented as someone who does not even know himself, and as someone with an uneasy conscience,

15. Bourne-Taylor, p. 199.

16. Limping Lucy gives voice to a radical threat to the social order represented by Blake. Yet she is not only a critic of the class system, she also formulates a programme of feminine self-sufficiency. Her distrust of man is such that she had a plan for her and Rosanna’s going “to London together like sisters, and living by /their/ needles” (227). Collins was obviously aware that the affirmation of femininity may take a variety of routes.

or rather unconscious. For that he always sleeps with a light in his room is a mark of his fear of confronting the nocturnal realm – the one of his own unconscious.

Rosanna Spearman casts a morbid tinge on Blake's becoming Father in the family romance of *The Moonstone*, but she is not the only one to do so. Another character who is doomed to perish to counterbalance the conventional closure is Ezra Jennings, a doctor's assistant, whose first name (= help) is an indication of how the family story uses him. Ezra's subservience in and to the story is counteracted by what he does to the story. He provides a "medical and metaphysical theory" within which the text stages its symbolical actions – a theory of the unconscious. In this respect, Ezra seems to be a counterpart to Sergeant Cuff, who believed that the displacement of the Diamond was "a deeply planned fraud" (210), which led him astray in the investigation. Of course, we might say that Cuff unconsciously struck the right string: a "deep plan" may be an unconscious hint at the role of the unconscious in the theft. Ezra's theory will prove to be a much better instrument for reading trifles surrounding the loss of the Diamond than Cuff's reliance on a rational causality.

In many ways Ezra is a hybrid and an outcast – racially, socially, familiarly, psychologically and even sexually. His father was an Englishman and his mother probably an Oriental woman, but her origin is not disclosed. A victim of a false accusation (also unexplained), he was renounced by his family and was doomed to continually search for remote places in which to shelter from the ill report. A woman was involved in this, and he struggled hard to provide for her, though suffering from an incurable internal complaint. Also, the progress of the disease "has gradually forced /him/ from the use of opium to the abuse of it" (430). Finally, he has problems controlling his emotional life and is inclined to "hysterical relief". This he explains thus: "Physiology says, and says truly, that some men are born with female constitution – and I am one of them" (422). Ezra is obviously the sum of the novel's metonymies: cultural otherness, womanhood, hysterics, the socially low and the unconscious. All this places him in a marginal position in relation to the family romance, delineating the domains that have to be subdued in order to have that romance constituted. His death and disappearance from the story is one of Collins's most striking ironic touches, especially if we know how much Jennings may look like his alter ego.<sup>17</sup>

"Jennings operates as Blake's 'unconscious', the site of the painful and intractable memories of which Blake is blissfully ignorant, as well as being the possessor of scientific knowledge of how the unconscious works,"<sup>18</sup> writes Jenny Bourne Taylor. However, it is important to stress that in setting up his theory of the unconscious Jennings does not become a mouthpiece for a critique of Blake's social, sexual and narrative authority, but that this critique itself works through Jennings's unconscious, or rather, through what his theory fails to mention. Jennings builds up the theoretical scaffold, but it is the

17. Collins was one of more curious characters in the Bohemian London of his age. He supported two women, neither as wife, and had three illegitimate children by one of them, a lower class woman named Martha Rudd. His meeting with the other woman, Caroline Graves, he transposed in *The Woman in White*. He allegedly saved her from a cruel husband and supported her and her daughter until his death. In his middle-age he began suffering from gout, which led him to take laudanum in ever increasing doses. So, though Jennings is perhaps not his exact replica in the novel (what character ever is?), he is a fairly close resemblance.

18. Bourne-Taylor, p. 180.

metonymic network of the text – not consciously articulated by Jennings – that turns it into the foundation of a cultural criticism. Ezra's specific function in the plot is to provide an explanation of how Blake might have taken the Diamond without knowing it, but his theory has a broader significance for the novel: it offers a hypothesis about a split subject which reaches beyond its pretext to become an interpretative key to the self-reflexive strategies of the novel.

If Blake is to be proven innocent while taking the Diamond, Ezra has to show that he was ignorant of what he was doing, and this in itself presupposes a hypothesis on a divided, split subject. To corroborate this hypothesis Ezra points to the "recognised authorities" of two Victorian physiologists, Dr. Carpenter and Dr. Elliotson.<sup>19</sup> Carpenter believed that "every sensory perception which has been once recognised by the perceptive consciousness, is registered (so to speak) in the brain, and may be reproduced at some subsequent time, although there may be no consciousness of its existence in the mind during the whole intermediate period" (440). On the other hand, Elliotson cites a case of a porter who lost a parcel when drunk, could not remember about it when sober, but drunk again he recollected where he left it. The reliance of such "authorities" helps Ezra to draw up a context that would convince Blake that the unconscious memory may be recovered and that they might try the experiment of reenacting what happened to him under the influence of laudanum on the night of the theft. But both sources primarily serve to suggest that Blake could have taken the Diamond without knowing it. This enables Ezra to produce an account which attributes Blake's transportation into the unconscious and his subsequent ignorance to laudanum: "When morning came, and the effect of the opium had been all slept off, you would wake as absolutely ignorant of what you had done in the night as if you had been living at the Antipodes." This sentence rounds off Ezra's reconstruction of the night of the theft, but the main part is equally interesting: "The action of the opium is comprised, in the majority of cases, in two influences – a stimulating influence first, and a sedative influence afterwards. Under the stimulating influence the latest and most vivid impressions left on your mind – namely, the impressions relating to the Diamond – would be likely, in your morbidly sensitive nervous condition, to become intensified in your brain, and would subordinate to themselves your judgement and your will – exactly as an ordinary dream subordinates to itself your judgement and your will" (442). This is, of course, proto-Freudian in its description of the working of the unconscious: the psyche is seen as splitting into two antipodal domains (conscious and unconscious), there is a hypothesis of a force deeper than will and judgement operating from the unconscious (which is similar to Freud's opposing id to ego and superego), and a suggestion of a

19. Jenny Bourne-Taylor's analysis makes much more out of Ezra's reference to the two doctors. She constructs an opposition between two models of the unconscious, the "domestic" by Carpenter and the "wild" by Elliotson, who was a much more marginal figure, dealing with mesmerism, and not in the least as recognised as the mainstream D. Carpenter. Yet it seems to me that for Jennings there is no contradiction between the quotations he uses, though there may be some between the entire discourses of the two doctors. For Jennings the essential thing is to prove that there is an unconscious, and that it may be somehow brought back to the conscious or reenacted. Beyond that the novel makes no other allusion to the two "authorities" – only the quoted ones of support. My argument is that by identifying the unconscious with India, woman and repressed desire, the novel gives the idea of the unconscious primarily the role of questioning and dissecting a domestic ideology, and not the role of expressing or supporting it.



specific process of reshaping the “mental impressions” (reminiscent of Freudian notions of primary process and dream work). Incidentally, Jennings himself uses the dream example (Freud’s “royal road”) to describe the unconscious processes. Also, this model suggests the notion of repression or subordination: if will and judgement are subordinated by something in a dream, it follows that in the conscious state they subordinate this implied elementary impulse. The Moonstone’s varied metonymic meanings and functions as object and signifier of desire already showed to us what the text constructs as the repressed – a dynamic field of otherness created by cultural, social and sexual domination.<sup>20</sup>

Corresponding to this model of the psyche, the text also offers a model of interpretation in an obviously self-reflexive gesture. Most interesting in this respect is the way in which Ezra discovers that Dr. Candy gave Blake opium by analysing his delirious ramblings. The question of delirium occupied Ezra in the writing on his book on the nervous system (“that will certainly never get published” – another implication that he cannot be domesticated), as he tells Blake: “Well, I had reached a section of my book, at that time, which touched on this same question of delirium... It has often occurred to me in the course of my medical practice to doubt whether we can justifiably infer – in cases of delirium – that the loss of the faculty of speaking connectedly implies of necessity the loss of the faculty of thinking as well” (442). He put his doubt to a test by taking down and analysing Dr. Candy’s delirious words:

“I reproduced my short-hand notes in the ordinary form of writing – leaving large spaces between the broken phrases, and even single words, as they had fallen disconnectedly from Mr. Candy’s lips. I then treated the result thus obtained on something like the principle which one adopts in putting together a child’s ‘puzzle’. It is all confusion to begin with; but it may be all brought into order and shape, if you can only find the right way. Acting on this plan, I filled in the blank spaces on the paper with what the words or phrases on either side of it suggested to me as the speaker’s meaning ... after putting the broken sentences together, I found the superior faculty of thinking going on, more or less connectedly, in my patient’s mind, while the inferior faculty of expression was in a state of almost complete incapacity and confusion.” (424)

The terms “expression” and “thinking” can be easily described as foreshadowing Freud’s manifest/latent hermeneutical mode. The text of Dr. Candy’s delirious production is treated like a puzzle with a decipherable hidden meaning. Beneath the manifest “expressive” confusion of such an unconscious text, there is latent “thinking” order. On the other hand, this interpretative strategy includes a prescription of contextualisation: the broken sentences – the text itself – are not seen as a closed system providing all that is needed for its interpretation. When Ezra claims that the product of all this is an “intelligible statement”, he actually means a product that is in part of his own making: “I have got the broken words, as they dropped from his lips, on one sheet of paper. And I have got the links of my own discovering, which connect those words together, on another sheet of paper” (424). In this way Collins suggests to his readers that his own text is nothing but a series of broken sentences before they search for the

20. *The Moonstone* suggests a discourse which looks like a historicised psychoanalysis. The Diamond’s metonymic logic designs the unconscious as a psychological domain shaped by an interplay of cultural forces or as a cultural domain giving shape to desire or the repression of it. In this novel (the repression of) desire is presented as a process inseparable from a cultural aetiology, and not as a closed logic of a family scenario, which is definitely a tendency in Freud.

clues to the textual puzzle in the context and make their own discoveries. Ezra implies that the context and the subject of interpretation become as much a part of the text as the broken sentences and blank spaces themselves. In other words, Collins makes Ezra's theory an invitation towards a self-reflexive and contextual hermeneutics, as a key to the novel's symbolical discourse on a historical reality. The consequences of Ezra's theorising for the novel are crucial: he shows us how to deal with the "expressive" trifles populating the text, suggesting at the same time that such prominent story features as detective suspense and conventional happy ending are subject to refashioning at another level of the text. Ezra also opens up the discursive space in which the *Moonstone* ceases to be simply a diamond and becomes an object and signifier of desire, identification, differentiation and projection, putting up a critique of what the text recognises as social or literary rule, convention or demand.

The discovery of the unconscious has therefore a central significance for this novel – it provides a logic of repression and displacement which in turn orders the *Moonstone*'s metonymic chain. It projects a mechanism by which the dominant ideologies and practices are reproduced at the expense of marginalisation, repression and subordination in domains as diverse as the empire and gender, society and psyche. The dominant social norms exposed to a denaturalisation by *The Moonstone* are those of subordination – familial, social, colonial. The novel focuses especially on the ideology of the "happy household", an ideology of social and sexual pacification that is reenacted by the conventional course of the Verinder/Blake story. And the family in this novel functions also as a medium in which the sexual, social and imperial contexts meet, intertwine and symbolically interchange. The act of positing the unconscious enables the novel to pass itself as an empowering of all the submerged domains. In another slyly worded passage, Ezra's language gives a fair idea of how much transgressive power the novel stores by its discovery of the unconscious. When the first effects of Ezra's experiment of reproducing Blake's opium experience begin to show – when the unconscious Blake starts to talk to himself – Ezra gives the following description of Bruff and Betteredge confronted with the spectacle of the unconscious: "Looking towards them now, I saw the law (as represented by Mr. Bruff's papers) lying unheeded on the floor. Mr. Bruff himself was looking eagerly through a crevice left in the imperfectly drawn curtains of the bed. And Betteredge, oblivious of all respect for social distinctions, was peeping over Mr. Bruff's shoulder"<sup>21</sup> (476). What an optimistic view of the transgressive power of the unconscious: faced with it the law is trampled on and social hierarchies collapse! *The Moonstone* should therefore be seen as a gesture of attributing power and discourse to the repressed/oppressed: India, servant, woman, body, desire, hysteric line up in a metonymic equation that renders the dominant discourses and practices much too narrow. This can be understood as a utopian drift of the novel, a

21. The novel seems to be constantly saying that in it there is more than meets the eye. And the eye is the busiest organ in the novel. Cuff's eyes "had a disconcerting trick, when they encountered your eyes, of looking as if they expected something more from you than you were aware yourself" (133). Betteredge attributes to Cuff's eyes penetration into the unconscious, and if Cuff does not do it, the novel does. The eye, metaphor of the process of detection, is continually turned into a mirror of repressed desire. The novel stages this as a transition from supervision to voyeurism: Rachel secretly watches Blake as he takes her Diamond, Clack secretly watches Godfrey as he courts Rachel; Jennings, Bruff, Betteredge and Rachel secretly watch Blake as his unconscious is proved to – irony again – exculpate him from his desire.

strong feeling of discomfort within the existing order of things most clearly suggested by Rosanna Spearman's and Ezra Jennings's removal from the family story. Obviously enough, the novel places its transgressive optimism into the sphere of analysis and discourse: by reenacting the social ritual of the family romance on the psychological and imperial stages it performs an analysis of the ritual's mechanisms and vehicles (class system, gender constructions, imperialist plunder). Thus, in spite of the expected completion of the story, the novel's denaturalising work is overpowering.

Rosanna Spearman speaks at one point to Gabriel Betteredge about his coat, meaning to comment on her own life, but her words also seem reminiscent of Blake's nightshirt and of the novel's strategy in general: "The stain is taken off... But the place shows, Mr. Betteredge – the place shows."<sup>21</sup> (57). The guilt is taken off of Blake, but the imperial, social, familial, sexual and psychological conflicts remain. Through its interplay of stains, trifles and blank spaces set in motion by the nomadic Moonstone, the novel builds a logic of displacement that connects all the repressed domains, or rather, brings out their complex interrelationships. We see the private, collective and cultural arenas parallel and influence one another. In other words, *The Moonstone* shows that the subjects of Rachel and Blake are also formed by something that both socially and culturally seems to be the furthest removed – by social and imperial margins.

They are formed by the close and the far – as far as the metonymic activity of the Diamond goes. In a modern sense, the metonymy is a "travelling" figure – it always works by further displacement, subverting the notions of centre and closure. It always lays everything at next door. This is why I insisted on calling the novel's logic of displacement a metonymy. The power of the novel lies in its metonymic relationalism: it shows that everything is interrelated, and that every identity is unstable and variable, always hatching the other(s) in the process of self-definition. Yet, this is not a relationalism without coordinates: the Diamond's trajectory draws a map of subordination. Mapping the repressed, it not only puts together a fascinating picture of the Victorian world, but also, as we have seen, gives optimistic voice to a multiverse struggling for expression in the face of patriarchal, social and imperial repression.

#### METONIMLIJSKA LOGIKA ROMANA *THE MOONSTONE*

Ovo čitanje najpoznatijeg romana Wilkiea Collinsa, *The Moonstone*, nastoji sugerirati neka od mogućih tumačenja najistaknutije metafore u romanu, dijamanta po kojem roman i nosi ime. Najveća važnost pridaje se otkriću nesvesnoga u ovom romanu, koje funkcionira kao žarište kritike nekih društvenih i književnih klišea.